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AGO D/A ltr, 29 Apr 1980; AGO D/A ltr, 29 Apr 1980	

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310**

IN REPLY REFER TO

AGDA (M) (2 Feb 70) FOR OT UT 694283

9 February 1970

**SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 173d
Airborne Brigade, Period Ending 31 October 1969 (U)**

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2. Information contained in this report is provided to insure appropriate benefits in the future from lessons learned during current operations and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

Kenneth G. Wickham

**KENNETH G. WICKHAM
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General**

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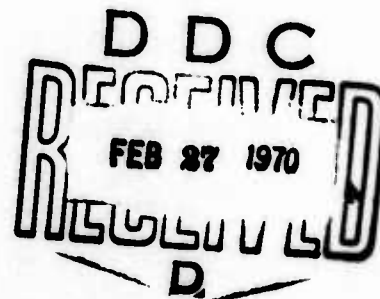
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE
APO San Francisco 96250

AVBE-SC/MHD

1 December 1969

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters 173d Airborne
Brigade, Period Ending 31 October 1969, RCS CSFOR - 65 (R2 (U))

Commanding General
I Field Force Vietnam
ATTN: AVFA-Hist
APO San Francisco 96350

1. (C) Operations: Significant Activities

a. General: Begun on 15 April 1969, Operation WASHINGTON GREEN continued as the 173d Airborne Brigade's primary operational effort during the reporting period. The operation is designed to provide regular force support to GVN agencies and territorial elements as they carry out the pacification program in the Brigade's area of operations, AO LEE. This AO, consisting of the north-eastern four districts (TAM QUAN, HOAI NHON, HOAI AN, and PHU MY) of BINH DINH Province, RVN, is shared by the 173d and the ARVN 22d Division. Operationally, the Brigade's specific duty is to provide the security screen for designated target hamlets which will foster an atmosphere of relative safety within which Revolutionary Development Cadres and other GVN officials and agencies can effect pacification security and development tasks.

b. The main force elements opposing the Brigade are two subordinate units of the 3d NVA Division; the 2d VC Regiment generally located in the northern An Lao Valley and the 18th NVA Regiment, a stay behind force, in the Vinh Thanh Mountains. Numerous local force units are located throughout the AO mainly in the mountainous locales contiguous to the populated areas. The total strength of these forces is approximately 5500 - 2400 main force and 3100 local force/VCI. Though the enemy has had a limited capability to move offensively he made no direct concerted effort to disrupt our operations. Continuing his previous pattern, the enemy was content to avoid standup battle and primarily employed local force guerrillas to harass US/GVN installations, property, and personnel. These harassing actions generally followed the pattern of standoff mortar and rocket attacks, sapper attacks, a high density booby trap program and limited ambushes. Toward the end, an increase of main force units was evident within the AO and in proximity to the northern rice growing hamlets. Countering the enemy threat, while at the same time pursuing

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the basic mission, the Brigade primarily employed two techniques of ground operations in and around the pacification hamlets: "search and clear" and "cordon and search." In general terms, on these operations the US effort consists of providing blocking forces while GVN territorial forces (RF/PF and National Police Field Force) conduct the actual searches.

c. The Brigade's security screen, which restricts Communist movement and influence on the population, is essentially a program of intense small unit actions. Employing fire teams and squads usually combined with territorial forces, the Brigade saturates the environs of the hamlets with numerous patrols and ambushes, particularly at night. This technique, dubbed the HAWK concept, manifests up to as many as 140 separate HAWK patrols dispersed throughout the AO at night and has been extremely effective in severely restricting the enemy's freedom of movement.

d. In addition to our own organic element, during the period 24 September through 31 October 1969, the 1st Battalion 12th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, was under the operational control of the 173d Airborne Brigade. The 1-12's forward CP was collocated at LZ TAPE, in the An Lao Valley, with an artillery battery (105mm howitzer). The rifle companies of the battalion primarily conducted reconnaissance-in-force operations in the central and southern An Lao Valley.

e. Of particular significance during the reporting period, the 3d Airborne Battalion, 503d Infantry, an organic battalion of the Brigade, was returned to the operational control of the 173d on 5 Sep 1969 from operations with Task Force South in southern II Corps Tactical Zone. In exchange for the 3d Battalion, the 1st Battalion (Mech), 50th Infantry, became OPCON to Task Force South, and was ultimately detached from the 173d on 7 Oct 1969.

f. Referring back to our current long term operation, the statistical results of WASHINGTON GREEN through 31 October 1969 are: US - 67 KIA and 725 WIA; enemy - 438 KIA, 54 POW, and 152 small arms CIA.

g. District Operations: The following is a synopsis of operations by districts:

(1) TAM QUAN District: The 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry base camp remained at LZ NORTH ENGLISH while its Tactical Operations Center (TOC) remained collocated with the District TOC in HOAI CHAU (V), TAM QUAN (D). By 17 October battalion elements had completed their final expansion effort and all inhabited portions of the District within the US AO were under the security influence of troopers of the 173d. At the close of the reporting period, no territorial forces were available to complement the battalion's forces in AN DO (H), the last hamlet to be secured. However, plans were completed for the deployment of some Regional Force elements early in the next reporting period. In general, operations by the 4th Battalion during

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August, September and October were primarily combined "cordon and search" as elements of the battalion joined the territorial forces and on several occasions elements of the 40th ARVN Regt. Extensive combined HAWK operations with RF/PF also continued during the reporting period. The 4th Battalion made increased use of the NPFF on many cordon and search operations, employing them as the search element along with the RF/PF. The NPFF also combined with the 4th Battalion on joint NPFF/US checkpoints established on QL-1. Training assistance continued to be provided to the RF/PF and Peoples Self Defense Group (PSDF). Artillery FO's attached to the battalion continued to achieve encouraging results from instruction presented to the local forces. Also, rifle companies and battalion Security Training Assistance Groups (STAG) continued to assist the three district MAT teams in the training of RF/PF and the instruction of PSDF in small unit tactics and weapons familiarization.

(2) HOAI NHON District: The 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry TOC remained collocated with the District TOC at BONG SON. This arrangement as in all districts, facilitates planning, coordination and execution of operational and intelligence activities and expedites clearance for supporting fires. The District Intelligence Operations Control Center (DIOCC), established in April, has very rapidly established its effectiveness in gathering, processing, and disseminating intelligence. A large measure of this effectiveness is attributable to the efforts of the 2d Battalion staff. US and territorial forces participated in a multitude of combined operations. On "reconnaissance-in-force" operations, US elements were paired with RF/PF - NPFF elements. This division of responsibility is better received by the local populace than any alternative which would result in US personnel searching private property. These combined operations have resulted in an increase in the aggressiveness of territorial forces, their willingness to participate in extended operations, and their overall technical and tactical proficiency. The training program for territorial forces focused mainly on the subjects of small unit tactics and weapons familiarization. The PSDF, who were recently issued M-16's, received extensive training on its operation and maintenance.

(3) HOAI AN District: Troop E, 17th Cavalry, became the Brigade's coordinating headquarters in HOAI AN District. In this capacity the Troop continued to lend US support to the accelerated pacification effort in the District. Troop E collocated its TAC CP with the HOAI AN District TOC at LZ ORANGE and continued the mutual coordination and support between US and District forces. In pursuing the common pacification goals and programs previously initiated by US, District, and Advisory personnel in HOAI AN, Troop E emphasized combined operations and training with local forces. In particular, night ambushes and patrolling, (combined HAWK team operations) were stressed with RF/PF units. An increased number of contacts, most resulting in success, stemmed from more aggressive patrolling and "reconnaissance-in-force" operations by the RF/PF units. Troop E continued a program of informal training in the field for the local units. Training teams of the troop completed

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a training cycle for all PSDF units located in the various target hamlets. Subjects included weapons familiarization and ambush tactics. On 29 October the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry assumed responsibility for HOAI AN and became the Brigade's coordinating headquarters there when E Troop was redeployed elsewhere in the Brigade AO.

(4) PHU MY District: Brigade operations in PHU MY District were expanded considerably during the reporting period as a result of a major repositioning of US Forces. On 1 August the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry having been relieved of responsibility for HOAI AN District, initiated operations in northwestern PHU MY District. The battalion moved its TOC from HOAI AN District to LZ UPLIFT, its base camp, and began coordinating pacification support efforts with PHU MY District officials through the 1st Bn (Mech), 50th Infantry, the Brigade's coordinating agency for the district. This relationship continued until 22 August when, in preparation for the planned replacement of the 1st of the 50th, the coordinating responsibility was transferred to the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry. At that time the 1st Battalion TOC was moved to PHU MY District Headquarters and the 1st of the 50th began preparations for its departure from AO LEE. The actual move of the 1st of the 50th was consummated in a phased movement which saw elements of the 3d Battalion, 503d Infantry replace the 1st of the 50th, unit by unit, in the field with no measurable lag in pacification progress. Since the closure of the 3d Battalion into PHU MY on 11 September that District has had a total of eight US rifle companies bolstering its pacification efforts whereas prior to 1 August there had been no more than four. Accordingly, pacification progress during the last six weeks of the reporting period was considerably accelerated over its previous pace. Basic operations within the District followed the same patterns as was found in other districts.

c. Combined Operations: During the period 30 September through 5 October 1969 the 173d Airborne Brigade conducted Operation DARBY TRAIL III in the vicinity of the I Corps - II Corps boundary. DARBY TRAIL III was actually the Brigade's portion of a combined operation which also included elements of the 11th Bde, Americal Division; the 4th Regiment, 2d ARVN Division; and TF 220, 22d ARVN Division. The Brigade's mission was to conduct "reconnaissance-in-force" operations in the upper An Lao Valley and to block movement of enemy forces which might attempt to move south in avoidance of FVMAF elements maneuvering against them. Brigade elements used in this operation were the 3d Battalion, 503d Infantry and the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, at that time under the operational control of the 173d. Virtually all of the contact occurred in the 4th ARVN Regiment's AO where they accounted for 55 enemy KIA (BC) and 21 small arms CIA. 173d elements accounted for one VC/NVA CIA, one small arm, and miscellaneous documents CIA. There were no friendly casualties during the operation.

d. Ranger Operations: Throughout the reporting period Company "N" (Ranger), 75th Infantry conducted 208 team size Ranger patrols within AO

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LEE which resulted in 223 separate sightings, 58 VC/NVA KIA, 13 detainees, and 9 small arms CIA. US losses were one KIA, and 14 WIA. Company "N" also conducted an intensive training program on Ranger tactics and techniques for a platoon of the Long Range Reconnaissance Company, 22d ARVN Division.

e. Combat Support:

(1) Artillery: Headquarters, 3d Battalion, 3-319th FA, the Brigade's organic artillery battalion, remained at LZ ENGLISH. Its firing batteries continued to support the Brigade fire support bases dispersed throughout the AO.

(2) Air: The TAC Air FACs of the Brigade flew 790 hours while controlling 204 airstrikes in support of Brigade operations. In addition, there was a total of 109 combat skyspot sorties and "Spooky" or "Shadow" was employed on 41 occasions. A total of 45 B52 sorties were flown on 12 targets in the northern and western An Lao Valley.

(3) Naval: Naval gunfire support, coordinated through SUB UNIT ONE, 1st ANGLICO, was provided by six destroyer class ships on station for an aggregate of 27 days during the reporting period. A US Coast Guard patrol craft fired approximately 20 rounds of 81mm mortar into the Tiger Mountains daily.

f. Combat Service Support:

(1) Engineer: Though deeply involved in the many civic action projects inherent in a sound pacification program, the 173d Engineer Company continued to provide direct support to all Brigade units. This support included daily minesweep operations along the major roads in AO LEE, the operation of three water points with a total daily capacity of 67,000 gallons, furnishing of technical advice and support of unit self help projects, and the attachment of one squad of Engineers to each maneuver battalion for routine Engineer missions.

(2) Chemical: The Brigade Chemical Section, in conjunction with the 51st Chemical Detachment, executed the following missions in support of Brigade Operations:

(a) Airborne Personnel Detection - 63 missions were flown for a total of 65 hours.

(b) Herbicide Missions - 325 hectares of crops and 284 hectares of dense vegetation were destroyed.

(c) Insecticide Spray Missions - Over 900 acres were covered in conjunction with CA/PSYOPS missions.

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(d) Riot Control Agent - CS was employed habitually against known enemy base camps and tunnel complexes and was used prior to tactical air-strikes to restrict enemy movement.

(e) Incendiary Missions - A total of 16,000 gallons of thickened fuel was expended employing UH-1H and CH-47 as delivery aircraft in instances when TAC Air was not practical or not available.

2. (C) Lessons Learned: Commander's Observations, Evaluations, and Recommendations.

a. Personnel:

(1) Ranger Recruiting

(a) Observation: Ranger personnel are recruited from two major sources: personnel newly arrived in-country and those who are serving with one of the infantry battalions.

(b) Evaluation: Past experience has shown that personnel who have been recruited from the infantry battalions have, in varying degrees, adjusted to the peculiarities of these units and are not necessarily apt students of Ranger tactics and techniques. Often, the habits which are considered good in a battalion would not be apropos to a Ranger operation.

(c) Recommendation: When possible, recruit Ranger personnel from those individuals who are newly arrived in-country. Selection should, of course, be made only after a Ranger candidate has successfully passed a personal interview and his records have undergone close scrutiny.

b. Operations:

(1) Target Acquisition

(a) Observation: There is an inherent inaccuracy in controlling an airstrike on well concealed targets on the basis of six digit coordinates.

(b) Evaluation: The use of the Air Cavalry Troop in aiding Air Force FAC's in target acquisition has proven very successful. The Air Cavalry, working from tree top level, marks the target with smoke for the FAC who in turn marks the target with rockets for the tactical fighters. As an added benefit, upon completion of the airstrike, the Air Cavalry can make an immediate BDA.

(c) Recommendation: That the Air Cavalry be used whenever available to aid the Air Force FAC in target acquisition. If Air Cavalry is not available, a C&C ship under certain conditions can perform a like function.

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(2) Rotation of Company AO's

(a) Observation: The nature of the pacification effort forces rifle companies to operate in relatively small AO's.

(b) Evaluation: Over a period of time, the enemy may detect flaws in a unit's modus operandi and turn the flaws to his advantage.

(c) Recommendation: Rifle companies operating in a pacification support environment should be rotated occasionally among various AO's. This prevents units from establishing patterns and keeps the enemy off balance by introducing a new method of operation.

(3) Boundary Adjustment

(a) Observation. Major units tend to avoid conducting operations in areas contiguous to military or political boundaries.

(b) Evaluation. The tendency observed is due to certain operational peculiarities of the Vietnam War and the difficulties they generate. Cases in point are the requirement to clear fires through what usually is a multiple of agencies and forces and the fact that boundaries both political and operational, more often than not are indistinguishable on the ground. As a consequence of these peculiarities fire support responsiveness, especially near boundaries, is not the optimum and the subject boundaries can quite easily and inadvertently be erased by elements maneuvering in proximity to them. Operational difficulties to be derived from these indications are obvious. Categorically, units in Vietnam are nearly always responsible for AO's comprised of more terrain than the units can fully occupy or continuously patrol. By keeping their forces totally employed in the unfettered portions of their AO, commanders quite often avoid the inherent difficulties of operations in areas contiguous to boundaries. On the enemy's side, he recognizes our difficulties and is quick to take advantage of any operational patterns they generate. In this case, when possible the enemy locates his bases astride or in proximity to established boundaries thereby enjoying relative safety and freedom of movement in the void we too often ignore.

(c) Recommendation. Adjacent units should develop and coordinate specific, planned programs of random boundary adjustments. The programs must encompass the entire length of shared boundaries and must be of sufficient depth to facilitate maneuver and fire clearance.

(4) Incendiary Expedients

(a) Observation. Often a target requiring incendiary ordnance cannot be engaged because of the non-availability of incendiary carrying TAC fighters,

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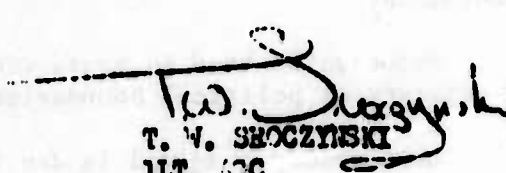
SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters 173d Airborne
Brigade, Period Ending 31 October 1969, RCS CSFOR - 65 (R2 (U)

or because the nature of the target precludes the use of high performance aircraft.

(b) Evaluation. On several occasions during the reporting period the 173d used incendiary expedients in support of combat operations. This expedient consists of thickened fuel (M4 thickener and MOGAS in a one to twenty ratio) which is sealed into a 55 gallon drum, airdropped from a UH-1H or CH-47 (external load), and ignited by tracer, WP round, or a thermite grenade. A UH-1H can carry two drums in this configuration and a CH-47 can carry nine.

(c) Recommendation. That incendiary expedients be used in lieu of TAC air when TAC air is not available or not practical for the mission.

FOR THE COMMANDER:


T. W. SHOCZYNSKI
1LT, ADC
Asst G

2 Incl

1. Organizational Chart

2. ~~Roster of Key Personnel~~ wd, HQ, DA

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AVFA-GC-HIST (1 Dec 69) 1st Ind (U)

11 DEC 1969

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned Headquarters 173d Airborne
Brigade, Period Ending 31 October 1969, HCS CSFOR - 65 (R2) (U)

DA, Headquarters, I Field Force Vietnam, APO 96350

TO: Commanding General, United States Army Vietnam, ATTN: AVHGC-DST,
APO 96375

1. (U) This headquarters has evaluated subject OHL and concurs.
2. (U) Reference para 2b(3)(c): Concur, however caution must be taken to insure that a boundary shift is fully coordinated with fire support clearance agencies including artillery and TAC Air.
3. (U) Reference para 2b(4): Concur. Incendiary expedients should only be used when TAC Air is not available or is not practical for the mission. For safety purposes, helicopter delivered flame munitions must be unfuzed and externally loaded.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

Frederick E. Holland
FREDERICK E. HOLLAND
1LT AGC
ST AG

CF:

2 - ACSFOR, DA

1 - CG, 173d Abn Bde

AVHGC-DST (1 Dec 69) 2d Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned Headquarters 173d Airborne
Brigade, Period Ending 31 October 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R2)

HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96375 4 JAN

TO: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-DT,
APO 96558

This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report-Lessons Learned
for the quarterly period ending 31 October 1969 from Headquarters, 173d
Airborne Brigade and concurs with the report as indorsed.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

P. H. Murray
for
P. H. MURRAY
CH, AGC
Assistant Adjutant General

Cy furn:
173d Abn Bde
I FFV

GPOP-ET (1 Dec 69) 3d Ind (U)

SUBJECT: Operational Report of HQ, 173d Airborne Brigade for Period
Ending 31 October 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R2) (U)

HQ, US Army, Pacific, APO San Francisco 96558 13 JAN 70

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the
Army, Washington, D. C. 20310

This headquarters concurs in subject report as indorsed.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF:

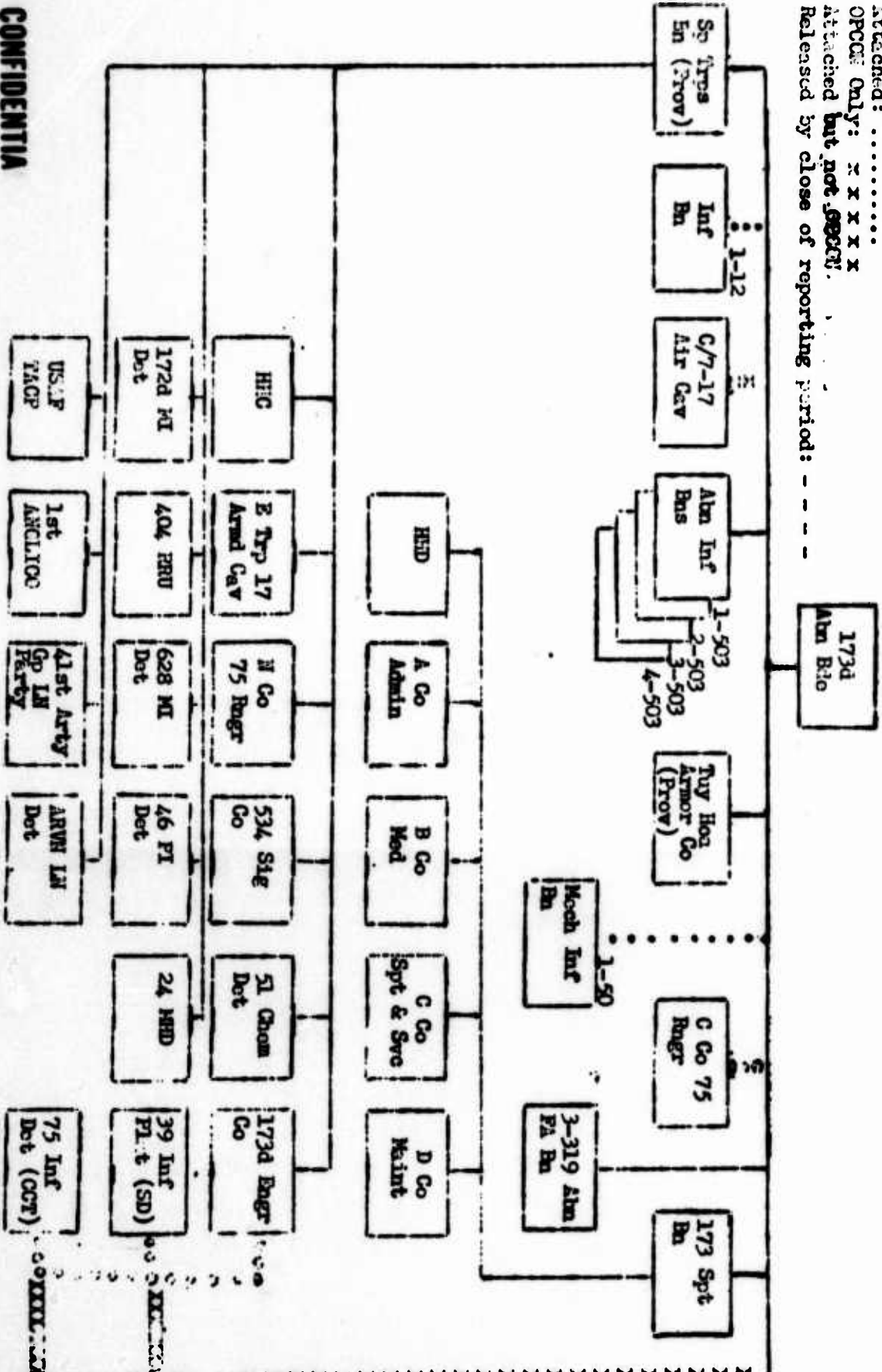
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C. L. SHORTT
CPT, AGC
Asst AG

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